

**Meet A Truly Remarkable Woman!: Mrs. Lillie Jackson gets credit for beach victory**  
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# Meet A Truly Remarkable Woman!

## • Mrs. Lillie Jackson gets credit for beach victory

By JOHN JASPER

BALTIMORE

Mrs. Lillie M. Jackson, more than any person in Baltimore, is responsible for the victory in the public recreation and playground cases decided this week by the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

In the spring of 1954, shortly before the Supreme Court's May 17, 1954 decision opening schools, the NAACP's Legal Redress Committee gathered to dis-

cuss the complaints of segregation in the city swimming pools and at the Fort Smallwood and Sandy Point beaches.

IN ONE OF THE hot sessions of the Legal Redress Committee, Mrs. Jackson turned to several of the association lawyers and said: "You young men were able to finish the University of Maryland Law School because the NAACP raised funds and supplied lawyers to take the

cases to the Supreme Court.

There was considerable comment by members of the committee as to whether the NAACP should hold up the recreation cases until the Supreme Court has spoken in the school cases.

Some of those opposed to pushing the recreation cases said that an adverse decision in the pool and beach cases might create unfavorable public reaction.

"Wait until the Supreme Court gives the school decision," was the insistent advice of some members of the committee.

Just as insistent was Mrs. Jackson. She said over and over again, "We shouldn't wait—we

can't wait. The Supreme Court will throw out the Plessy vs. Ferguson case and say separate but equal is no longer the law of the land.

"The Supreme Court will include recreation as well as schools and we must go ahead."

"If your education has meant anything, you must be willing to give some of your time back to the Association and take this case to the courts."

Over the opposition of the "time-is-not-riper" and conservative members of the committee, Mrs. Jackson won her point.

And find the money she did. With the help of other members of the committee she was able

to raise \$2,000 in a short time to finance these cases.

On July 27, 1954 Judge Roszel C. Thomsen, a new judge faced with his first major decision, having just been named to the U.S. District Court, rendered his decision. "... segregation is the law in public playgrounds — beaches and recreation ..." he said "... "

There was no disagreement in the Legal Redress Committee which was unanimous in voting to appeal Judge Thomsen's decision.

This reporter recalls vividly that there was a catch in the voice of Mrs. Jackson as she told the group—"We can't let these plaintiffs down; we

can't wait. We must act now. Where is your faith? We'll carry these cases to a higher court, if necessary; we'll find the money . . . God's storehouse is full . . . "

NAACP ATTORNEYS argued the case before Judges Parker, Dobie and Soper. The hearing lasted less than an hour, and there was no questioning of counsel. Some predicted that the court would render an adverse decision.

But on March 14, 1955—just this week — the court rendered its decision—a favorable one which said in effect that the

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# Baltimore's remarkable woman—Mrs. Lillie Jackson

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Supreme Court's May 17th ruling opening schools also applied to recreation — public places maintained by the city and state . . . segregation in recreation and in another field of civil or political activity is now, illegal in this area as well as in schools.

Mrs. Jackson was in New York at a National NAACP meeting when word of the decision came, but she was back in Baltimore Monday evening in time to issue a statement. She said:

"As president of the Baltimore NAACP and the Maryland State Conference of NAACP Branches, I am exceedingly happy that the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals has justified our faith in the democratic principles upon which our country was founded.

"We are proud to have served as the instrument through which this new advance to democracy in Maryland has been made. This is the NAACP way, to redress our grievances through the duly constituted courts of the land.

"I wish to commend the plaintiffs who had the courage to protest racial injustice, the AFRO-AMERICAN which has fought valiantly at our side and whose president serves as chairman of our Legal Redress Committee, the eminent Baltimore attorneys, Linwood Koger Jr., and Tucker Dearing, who gave so unselfishly of their time and talents, our national legal staff, attorneys Thurgood Marshall, Jack Greenberg, and Robert Carter, who supervised the legal preparation of these suits and above all our faithful members in Baltimore and throughout the state without whose loyalty and financial support this great history could not have been possible.

"May God continue to guide us and to bless our efforts until we shall be in deed as well as song the Free State of Maryland."

**NOBODY KNOWS** or can guess—not even Mrs. Jackson or her husband, Keiffer Jackson, how many hours a day or week Mrs. Jackson gives in service to the community. It is known she devotes every day to NAACP business and receives no pay for her services.

Until early this year, when her doctor said her blood pressure was dangerously high, Mrs. Jackson was up every morning at 8 o'clock.

After a breakfast, of fruit juice, toast, prepared cereal and coffee, she kept busy on the telephone and she remains busy far into the night, often until 1:00 or 2 o'clock in the morning.

Now, because of her doctor's orders, Mrs. Jackson does not usually arrive at her office until about 11:00 o'clock in the morning, but as early as 8:00 o'clock her phone is busy until she goes to the office and up to and after midnight.

"I have never gotten to the point of saying I am not at home, not even in the office. I think everybody is important. You can't serve God if you do not remember that."

"One time when my secretary told someone I was in conference, I told her never do that again; I am not too busy—conference or no conference.

"The person who is calling might be an humble person who needs help right away, and I am not too busy to listen to him and help him, if can."

**MEMBERS OF** Mrs. Jackson's household say that she often wakes up in the middle of the night to discuss a case concerning employment discrimination or the fights for civil rights.

Just the other night she aroused them and said "I am worried about the girls who cannot get jobs as telephone operators with the C and P Telephone Company."

"I fight so hard because I personally do not like discrimination and segregation. We pay the same taxes as anyone else, why shouldn't our children enjoy public facilities and be able to get jobs in the telephone company, for example?

"I fight because I want others to get inspiration, too. Some people say we are "pressuring" things. But we have got to have pressure to draw water from the tap or to walk and we need pressure to get our rights.

"We must continue to pool our money and go into the courts and fight. That's the Christian way, to fight for our rights; call it "pressure" if you want to.

"Some people say I am emotional. Yes, maybe I am, but I do not like this thing of robbing my people. It is unjustifiable, ungodly and immoral and I am going to get mad about it!

"I do not ask for jobs for our people because of their color, but only if they are qualified and can do the work."

**MRS. JACKSON** and her husband, Keiffer Jackson, now make their home at 1320 Eutaw Place. They occupy the 1st floor apartment which means that she does not now have to go up and down steps.

Before moving to the Eutaw Place address, they lived at 1226 Druid Hill Avenue for 29 years. The living room of the Eutaw Place home has many pictures of the family their daughter,

son, grandchildren and certificates and diplomas.

"When we moved here, some people said we should go out and buy new furniture," Mrs. Jackson said.

"I am no housekeeper and I am not interested in furniture. I think it is important to keep a clean and neat home, but furniture is not important."

She says that she would not be able to devote her full time to the work of the NAACP were it not for the cooperation and help of her husband.

In their early years of marriage, while the children were still young, Mr. Jackson was a moving picture exhibitor and Mrs. Jackson spent all of her time helping him on the job and rearing the children.

When the first child was eligible for college, Mrs. Jackson tried to enroll her at the Maryland Institute, but she was refused because of her color.

At that time, Morgan College was not accredited and the University of Maryland admitted only white students.

That is when she became conscious of the disadvantages she lived under. Mrs. Jackson explained.

"SO IN 1935, when the NAACP executives out of New York sent down here to see what could be done to make our branch more active, I said "I would work."

"Then there were only a few members, no executive secretary and nine board members."

Today, the Baltimore branch is the most active in the country.

"We have 10,000 active members, 25,000 members on our rolls and a staff of 14."

Mrs. Jackson said that stalwart workers in the Association who have helped to put over its program have included such people as Mrs. R. Garland Chisell, vice president and Mrs. Sarah Diggs and Mrs. Enolia McMillan. Without them and many others, she says, she could not have put over the program.

**Other civic leaders and workers may be as obsessed or as dedicated as Mrs. Jackson is, but certainly she must wear the crown as Baltimore's most remarkable woman.**

She is a woman who is dedicated to freedom for all Americans—a woman who believes that she can not sit at home and relax as long as one area of injustice cries for attention.

**MRS. VERDA** Welcome, president of the Women's Cooperative Civic League and president of the Northwest Improvement Association says of Mrs. Jackson.

"I do not think even Mrs. Jackson's enemies can take away from her the title of Baltimore's most remarkable woman."

"The community, both white and colored, respects her for the drive she has. A lot of good

has come as a result of her efforts.

"The entire city owes her a debt of gratitude. I think if anyone deserves a testimonial from a total community, it is Mrs. Lillie Jackson."

**DR. D. O. W. HOLMES:** "Certainly Mrs. Jackson is remarkable in many ways. She is the best known, most active and most useful member of our community."

"Anyone who keeps that NAACP booming as she does, is doing a hard job and doing it well."

"When I came back here in 1937 (from Howard University) to become president of Morgan State College, I was surprised to find her in the position of leadership she had assumed with the NAACP."

"She was not a remarkable student when I knew her in high school, but while I was spending 20 years at Howard University, she was making a huge success of rearing a family and she is remarkable on that score. She has three fine daughters and a son."

"It would be pretty hard to find anyone who gives his entire time to the NAACP or any group, but that is what Mrs. Jackson does."

"Some people say she should be more diplomatic in her utterances. But I am not so sure we do not need somebody like Mrs. Jackson to stimulate and provoke our more stolid citizens."

**MRS. JACKSON** is an interesting woman who walks fast and often gestures with her hands to put over a point.

She and Mr. Jackson have three daughters, Virginia, Savannah, Georgia, a teacher (Mrs. Calvin Kiah), who is also a skilled artist; Juanita (Mrs. Clarence Mitchell), a Baltimore attorney, (who is active with the NAACP Legal Redress Committee); Marian (Mrs. Karl Downs), concert singer and a teacher in the Pasadena, California schools, and Bowen, who serves as executive secretary of the Baltimore Branch. There are nine grandchildren.

Mrs. Jackson is an active worker in the Sharp Street Memorial Methodist Church, which several years ago elected her its first woman trustee.

Does Baltimore's most remarkable woman get tired of listening to other people's complaints?

Does she wish she could shut off her phone and take a long vacation at a resort or enjoy a trip abroad which she could well afford and richly deserves?

**Not Mrs. Lillie M. Jackson.** "There's too much to do and too little time," she confides with a twinkle in her eye.

When you hear her say it, you understand why she is a dedicated woman who would not be happy sitting at home doing nothing. That's what makes her remarkable.



MRS. KIEFFER (LILLIE M.) JACKSON

"I fight so hard because I personally do not like segregation . . ."